

## **PD WEEKLY ~ VOL 1, ISS. 7**



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*The accent's on humor in this issue of PD Weekly, deliberate or inferred. An early work by Miss Ferber, a long-form poem of Lindsay's THAT MUST BE READ OUT LOUD, a droll ghost story from Miss McInery, and yes, that's future best supporting actor Mr. Arkin with a wacky sci-fi tale. Edited by Matt Pierard, this is a non-commercial Creative Commons copyrighted item.*

## The Woman Who Tried to Be Good [1913]

From: The Project Gutenberg EBook of *One Basket*, by Edna Ferber

Before she tried to be a good woman she had been a very bad woman--so bad that she could trail her wonderful apparel up and down Main Street, from the Elm Tree Bakery to the railroad tracks, without once having a man doff his hat to her or a woman bow. You passed her on the street with a surreptitious glance, though she was well worth looking at--in her furs and laces and plumes. She had the only full-length mink coat in our town, and Ganz's shoe store sent to Chicago for her shoes. Hers were the miraculously small feet you frequently see in stout women.

Usually she walked alone; but on rare occasions, especially round Christmastime, she might have been seen accompanied by some silent, dull-eyed, stupid-looking girl, who would follow her dumbly in and out of stores, stopping now and then to admire a cheap comb or a chain set with flashy imitation stones--or, queerly enough, a doll with yellow hair and blue eyes and very pink cheeks. But, alone or in company, her appearance in the stores of our town was the signal for a sudden jump in the cost of living. The storekeepers mulcted her; and she knew it and paid in silence, for she was of the class that has no redress. She owned the House with the Closed Shutters, near the freight depot--did Blanche Devine.

In a larger town than ours she would have passed unnoticed. She did not look like a bad woman. Of course she used too much make-up, and as she passed you caught the oversweet breath of a certain heavy scent. Then, too, her diamond eardrops would have made any woman's features look hard; but her plump face, in spite of its heaviness, wore an expression of good-humored intelligence, and her eyeglasses gave her somehow a look of respectability. We do not associate vice with eyeglasses. So in a large city she would have passed for a well-dressed, prosperous, comfortable wife and mother who was in danger of losing her figure from an overabundance of good living; but with us she was a town character, like Old Man Givins, the drunkard, or the weak-minded Binns girl. When she passed the drug-store corner there would be a sniggering among the vacant-eyed loafers idling there, and they would leer at each other and jest in undertones.

So, knowing Blanche Devine as we did, there was something resembling a riot in one of our most respectable neighborhoods when it was learned that she had given up her interest in the house near the freight depot and was going to settle down in the white cottage on the corner and be good. All the husbands in the block, urged on by righteously indignant wives, dropped in on Alderman Mooney after supper to see if the thing could not be stopped. The fourth of the protesting husbands to arrive was the Very Young Husband who lived next door to the corner cottage

that Blanche Devine had bought. The Very Young Husband had a Very Young Wife, and they were the joint owners of Snooky. Snooky was three-going-on-four, and looked something like an angel--only healthier and with grimmer hands. The whole neighborhood borrowed her and tried to spoil her; but Snooky would not spoil.

Alderman Mooney was down in the cellar, fooling with the furnace.

He was in his furnace overalls; a short black pipe in his mouth. Three protesting husbands had just left. As the Very Young Husband, following Mrs. Mooney's directions, descended the cellar stairs, Alderman Mooney looked up from his tinkering. He peered through a haze of pipe smoke.

"Hello!" he called, and waved the haze away with his open palm.

"Come on down! Been tinkering with this blamed furnace since supper. She don't draw like she ought. 'Long toward spring a furnace always gets balky. How many tons you used this winter?"

"Oh-five," said the Very Young Husband shortly. Alderman Mooney considered it thoughtfully. The Young Husband leaned up against the side of the water tank, his hands in his pockets. "Say, Mooney, is that right about Blanche Devine's having bought the house on the corner?"

"You're the fourth man that's been in to ask me that this evening. I'm expecting the rest of the block before bedtime. She bought it all right."

The Young Husband flushed and kicked at a piece of coal with the toe of his boot.

"Well, it's a darned shame!" he began hotly. "Jen was ready to cry at supper. This'll be a fine neighborhood for Snooky to grow up in! What's a woman like that want to come into a respectable street for, anyway? I own my home and pay my taxes--"

Alderman Mooney looked up.

"So does she," he interrupted. "She's going to improve the place--paint it, and put in a cellar and a furnace, and build a porch, and lay a cement walk all round."

The Young Husband took his hands out of his pockets in order to emphasize his remarks with gestures.

"What's that got to do with it? I don't care if she puts in diamonds for windows and sets out Italian gardens and a terrace with peacocks on

it. You're the alderman of this ward, aren't you? Well, it was up to you to keep her out of this block! You could have fixed it with an injunction or something. I'm going to get up a petition--that's what I'm going----"

Alderman Mooney closed the furnace door with a bang that drowned the rest of the threat. He turned the draft in a pipe overhead and brushed his sooty palms briskly together like one who would put an end to a profitless conversation.

"She's bought the house," he said mildly, "and paid for it. And it's hers. She's got a right to live in this neighborhood as long as she acts respectable."

The Very Young Husband laughed.

"She won't last! They never do."

Alderman Mooney had taken his pipe out of his mouth and was rubbing his thumb over the smooth bowl, looking down at it with unseeing eyes. On his face was a queer look--the look of one who is embarrassed because he is about to say something honest.

"Look here! I want to tell you something: I happened to be up in the mayor's office the day Blanche Devine signed for the place. She had to go through a lot of red tape before she got it--had quite a time of it, she did! And say, kid, that woman ain't so--bad."

The Very Young Husband exclaimed impatiently:

"Oh, don't give me any of that, Mooney! Blanche Devine's a town character. Even the kids know what she is. If she's got religion or something, and wants to quit and be decent, why doesn't she go to another town--Chicago or someplace--where nobody knows her?"

That motion of Alderman Mooney's thumb against the smooth pipe bowl stopped. He looked up slowly.

"That's what I said--the mayor too. But Blanche Devine said she wanted to try it here. She said this was home to her. Funny--ain't it? Said she wouldn't be fooling anybody here. They know her. And if she moved away, she said, it'd leak out some way sooner or later. It does, she said. Always! Seems she wants to live like--well, like other women. She put it like this: she says she hasn't got religion, or any of that. She says she's no different than she was when she was twenty. She says that for the last ten years the ambition of her life has been to be able to go into a grocery store and ask the price of, say, celery; and, if the clerk charged her ten when it ought to be seven, to be able to

sass him with a regular piece of her mind--and then sail out and trade somewhere else until he saw that she didn't have to stand anything from storekeepers, any more than any other woman that did her own marketing. She's a smart woman, Blanche is! God knows I ain't taking her part--exactly; but she talked a little, and the mayor and me got a little of her history."

A sneer appeared on the face of the Very Young Husband. He had been known before he met Jen as a rather industrious sower of wild oats. He knew a thing or two, did the Very Young Husband, in spite of his youth! He always fussed when Jen wore even a V-necked summer gown on the street.

"Oh, she wasn't playing for sympathy," went on Alderman Mooney in answer to the sneer. "She said she'd always paid her way and always expected to. Seems her husband left her without a cent when she was eighteen--with a baby. She worked for four dollars a week in a cheap eating house. The two of 'em couldn't live on that. Then the baby----"

"Good night!" said the Very Young Husband. "I suppose Mrs. Mooney's going to call?"

"Minnie! It was her scolding all through supper that drove me down to monkey with the furnace. She's wild--Minnie is." He peeled off his overalls and hung them on a nail. The Young Husband started to ascend the cellar stairs. Alderman Mooney laid a detaining finger on his sleeve. "Don't say anything in front of Minnie! She's boiling! Minnie and the kids are going to visit her folks out West this summer; so I wouldn't so much as dare to say 'Good morning!' to the Devine woman. Anyway, a person wouldn't talk to her, I suppose. But I kind of thought I'd tell you about her.

"Thanks!" said the Very Young Husband dryly.

In the early spring, before Blanche Devine moved in, there came stone-masons, who began to build something. It was a great stone fireplace that rose in massive incongruity at the side of the little white cottage. Blanche Devine was trying to make a home for herself.

Blanche Devine used to come and watch them now and then as the work progressed. She had a way of walking round and round the house, looking up at it and poking at plaster and paint with her umbrella or finger tip. One day she brought with her a man with a spade. He spaded up a neat square of ground at the side of the cottage and a long ridge near the fence that separated her yard from that of the Very Young Couple next door. The ridge spelled sweet peas and nasturtiums to our small-town eyes.

On the day that Blanche Devine moved in there was wild agitation among the white-ruffed bedroom curtains of the neighborhood. Later on certain odors, as of burning dinners, pervaded the atmosphere. Blanche Devine, flushed and excited, her hair slightly askew, her diamond eardrops flashing, directed the moving, wrapped in her great fur coat; but on the third morning we gasped when she appeared out-of-doors, carrying a little household ladder, a pail of steaming water, and sundry voluminous white cloths. She reared the little ladder against the side of the house, mounted it cautiously, and began to wash windows with housewifely thoroughness. Her stout figure was swathed in a gray sweater and on her head was a battered felt hat--the sort of window--washing costume that has been worn by women from time immemorial. We noticed that she used plenty of hot water and clean rags, and that she rubbed the glass until it sparkled, leaning perilously sideways on the ladder to detect elusive streaks. Our keenest housekeeping eye could find no fault with the way Blanche Devine washed windows.

By May, Blanche Devine had left off her diamond eardrops--perhaps it was their absence that gave her face a new expression. When she went downtown we noticed that her hats were more like the hats the other women in our town wore; but she still affected extravagant footgear, as is right and proper for a stout woman who has cause to be vain of her feet. We noticed that her trips downtown were rare that spring and summer. She used to come home laden with little bundles; and before supper she would change her street clothes for a neat, washable housedress, as is our thrifty custom. Through her bright windows we could see her moving briskly about from kitchen to sitting room; and from the smells that floated out from her kitchen door, she seemed to be preparing for her solitary supper the same homely viands that were frying or stewing or baking in our kitchens. Sometimes you could detect the delectable scent of browning, hot tea biscuit. It takes a determined woman to make tea biscuit for no one but herself.

Blanche Devine joined the church. On the first Sunday morning she came to the service there was a little flurry among the ushers at the vestibule door. They seated her well in the rear. The second Sunday morning a dreadful thing happened. The woman next to whom they seated her turned, regarded her stonily for a moment, then rose agitatedly and moved to a pew across the aisle.

Blanche Devine's face went a dull red beneath her white powder. She never came again--though we saw the minister visit her once or twice. She always accompanied him to the door pleasantly, holding it well open until he was down the little flight of steps and on the sidewalk. The minister's wife did not call.

She rose early, like the rest of us; and as summer came on we used to

see her moving about in her little garden patch in the dewy, golden morning. She wore absurd pale-blue negligees that made her stout figure loom immense against the greenery of garden and apple tree. The neighborhood women viewed these negligees with Puritan disapproval as they smoothed down their own prim, starched gingham skirts. They said it was disgusting--and perhaps it was; but the habit of years is not easily overcome. Blanche Devine--snipping her sweet peas, peering anxiously at the Virginia creeper that clung with such fragile fingers to the trellis, watering the flower baskets that hung from her porch--was blissfully unconscious of the disapproving eyes. I wish one of us had just stopped to call good morning to her over the fence, and to say in our neighborly, small-town way: "My, ain't this a scorcher! So early too! It'll be fierce by noon!"

But we did not.

I think perhaps the evenings must have been the loneliest for her. The summer evenings in our little town are filled with intimate, human, neighborly sounds. After the heat of the day it is pleasant to relax in the cool comfort of the front porch, with the life of the town eddying about us. We sew and read out there until it grows dusk. We call across lots to our next-door neighbor. The men water the lawns and the flower boxes and get together in little, quiet groups to discuss the new street paving. I have even known Mrs. Hines to bring her cherries out there when she had canning to do, and pit them there on the front porch partially shielded by her porch vine, but not so effectually that she was deprived of the sights and sounds about her. The kettle in her lap and the dishpan full of great ripe cherries on the porch floor by her chair, she would pit and chat and peer out through the vines, the red juice staining her plump bare arms.

I have wondered since what Blanche Devine thought of us those lonesome evenings--those evenings filled with friendly sights and sounds. It must have been difficult for her, who had dwelt behind closed shutters so long, to seat herself on the new front porch for all the world to stare at; but she did sit there--resolutely--watching us in silence.

She seized hungrily upon the stray crumbs of conversation that fell to her. The milkman and the iceman and the butcher boy used to hold daily conversation with her. They--sociable gentlemen--would stand on her door-step, one grimy hand resting against the white of her doorpost, exchanging the time of day with Blanche in the doorway--a tea towel in one hand, perhaps, and a plate in the other. Her little house was a miracle of cleanliness. It was no uncommon sight to see her down on her knees on the kitchen floor, wielding her brush and rag like the rest of us. In canning and preserving time there floated out from her kitchen the pungent scent of pickled crab apples; the mouth-watering smell that meant sweet pickles; or the cloying, divinely sticky odor

that meant raspberry jam. Snooky, from her side of the fence, often used to peer through the pickets, gazing in the direction of the enticing smells next door.

Early one September morning there floated out from Blanche Devine's kitchen that fragrant, sweet scent of fresh-baked cookies--cookies with butter in them, and spice, and with nuts on top. Just by the smell of them your mind's eye pictured them coming from the oven-crisp brown circlets, crumbly, delectable. Snooky, in her scarlet sweater and cap, sniffed them from afar and straightway deserted her sand pile to take her stand at the fence. She peered through the restraining bars, standing on tiptoe. Blanche Devine, glancing up from her board and rolling pin, saw the eager golden head. And Snooky, with guile in her heart, raised one fat, dimpled hand above the fence and waved it friendlily. Blanche Devine waved back. Thus encouraged, Snooky's two hands wigwagged frantically above the pickets. Blanche Devine hesitated a moment, her floury hand on her hip. Then she went to the pantry shelf and took out a clean white saucer. She selected from the brown jar on the table three of the brownest, crumbliest, most perfect cookies, with a walnut meat perched atop of each, placed them temptingly on the saucer and, descending the steps, came swiftly across the grass to the triumphant Snooky. Blanche Devine held out the saucer, her lips smiling, her eyes tender. Snooky reached up with one plump white arm.

"Snooky!" shrilled a high voice. "Snooky!" A voice of horror and of wrath. "Come here to me this minute! And don't you dare to touch those!" Snooky hesitated rebelliously, one pink finger in her pouting mouth.

"Snooky! Do you hear me?"

And the Very Young Wife began to descend the steps of her back porch. Snooky, regretful eyes on the toothsome dainties, turned away aggrieved. The Very Young Wife, her lips set, her eyes flashing, advanced and seized the shrieking Snooky by one arm and dragged her away toward home and safety.

Blanche Devine stood there at the fence, holding the saucer in her hand. The saucer tipped slowly, and the three cookies slipped off and fell to the grass. Blanche Devine stood staring at them a moment. Then she turned quickly, went into the house, and shut the door.

It was about this time we noticed that Blanche Devine was away much of the time. The little white cottage would be empty for weeks. We knew she was out of town because the expressman would come for her trunk. We used to lift our eyebrows significantly. The newspapers and handbills would accumulate in a dusty little heap on the porch; but when she returned there was always a grand cleaning, with the windows open, and



Blanche--her head bound turbanwise in a towel--appearing at a window every few minutes to shake out a dustcloth. She seemed to put an enormous amount of energy into those cleanings--as if they were a sort of safety valve.

As winter came on she used to sit up before her grate fire long, long after we were asleep in our beds. When she neglected to pull down the shades we could see the flames of her cosy fire dancing gnomelike on the wall. There came a night of sleet and snow, and wind and rattling hail--one of those blustering, wild nights that are followed by morning-paper reports of trains stalled in drifts, mail delayed, telephone and telegraph wires down. It must have been midnight or past when there came a hammering at Blanche Devine's door--a persistent, clamorous rapping. Blanche Devine, sitting before her dying fire half asleep, started and cringed when she heard it, then jumped to her feet, her hand at her breast--her eyes darting this way and that, as though seeking escape.

She had heard a rapping like that before. It had meant bluecoats swarming up the stairway, and frightened cries and pleadings, and wild confusion. So she started forward now, quivering. And then she remembered, being wholly awake now--she remembered, and threw up her head and smiled a little bitterly and walked toward the door. The hammering continued, louder than ever. Blanche Devine flicked on the porch light and opened the door. The half-clad figure of the Very Young Wife next door staggered into the room. She seized Blanche Devine's arm with both her frenzied hands and shook her, the wind and snow beating in upon both of them.

"The baby!" she screamed in a high, hysterical voice. "The baby! The baby----!"

Blanche Devine shut the door and shook the Young Wife smartly by the shoulders.

"Stop screaming," she said quietly. "Is she sick?"

The Young Wife told her, her teeth chattering:

"Come quick! She's dying! Will's out of town. I tried to get the doctor. The telephone wouldn't---- I saw your light! For God's sake----"

Blanche Devine grasped the Young Wife's arm, opened the door, and together they sped across the little space that separated the two houses. Blanche Devine was a big woman, but she took the stairs like a girl and found the right bedroom by some miraculous woman instinct. A dreadful choking, rattling sound was coming from Snooky's bed.

"Croup," said Blanche Devine, and began her fight.

It was a good fight. She marshaled her inadequate forces, made up of the half-fainting Young Wife and the terrified and awkward hired girl.

"Get the hot water on--lots of it!" Blanche Devine pinned up her sleeves. "Hot cloths! Tear up a sheet--or anything! Got an oilstove? I want a tea-kettle boiling in the room. She's got to have the steam. If that don't do it we'll raise an umbrella over her and throw a sheet over, and hold the kettle under till the steam gets to her that way. Got any ipecac?"

The Young Wife obeyed orders, white-faced and shaking. Once Blanche Devine glanced up at her sharply.

"Don't you dare faint!" she commanded.

And the fight went on. Gradually the breathing that had been so frightful became softer, easier. Blanche Devine did not relax. It was not until the little figure breathed gently in sleep that Blanche Devine sat back, satisfied. Then she tucked a cover at the side of the bed, took a last satisfied look at the face on the pillow, and turned to look at the wan, disheveled Young Wife.

"She's all right now. We can get the doctor when morning comes--though I don't know's you'll need him."

The Young Wife came round to Blanche Devine's side of the bed and stood looking up at her.

"My baby died," said Blanche Devine simply. The Young Wife gave a little inarticulate cry, put her two hands on Blanche Devine's broad shoulders, and laid her tired head on her breast.

"I guess I'd better be going," said Blanche Devine.

The Young Wife raised her head. Her eyes were round with fright.

"Going! Oh, please stay! I'm so afraid. Suppose she should take sick again! That awful--breathing----"

"I'll stay if you want me to."

"Oh, please! I'll make up your bed and you can rest----"

"I'm not sleepy. I'm not much of a hand to sleep anyway. I'll sit up here in the hall, where there's a light. You get to bed. I'll watch

and see that everything's all right. Have you got something I can read out here--something kind of lively--with a love story in it?"

So the night went by. Snooky slept in her white bed. The Very Young Wife half dozed in her bed, so near the little one. In the hall, her stout figure looming grotesque in wall shadows, sat Blanche Devine, pretending to read. Now and then she rose and tiptoed into the bedroom with miraculous quiet, and stooped over the little bed and listened and looked--and tiptoed away again, satisfied.

The Young Husband came home from his business trip next day with tales of snowdrifts and stalled engines. Blanche Devine breathed a sigh of relief when she saw him from her kitchen window. She watched the house now with a sort of proprietary eye. She wondered about Snooky; but she knew better than to ask. So she waited. The Young Wife next door had told her husband all about that awful night--had told him with tears and sobs. The Very Young Husband had been very, very angry with her--angry, he said, and astonished! Snooky could not have been so sick! Look at her now! As well as ever. And to have called such a woman! Well, he did not want to be harsh; but she must understand that she must never speak to the woman again. Never!

So the next day the Very Young Wife happened to go by with the Young Husband. Blanche Devine spied them from her sitting-room window, and she made the excuse of looking in her mailbox in order to go to the door. She stood in the doorway and the Very Young Wife went by on the arm of her husband. She went by--rather white-faced--without a look or a word or a sign!

And then this happened! There came into Blanche Devine's face a look that made slits of her eyes, and drew her mouth down into an ugly, narrow line, and that made the muscles of her jaw tense and hard. It was the ugliest look you can imagine. Then she smiled--if having one's lips curl away from one's teeth can be called smiling.

Two days later there was great news of the white cottage on the corner. The curtains were down; the furniture was packed; the rugs were rolled. The wagons came and backed up to the house and took those things that had made a home for Blanche Devine. And when we heard that she had bought back her interest in the House with the Closed Shutters, near the freight depot, we sniffed.

"I knew she wouldn't last!" we said.

"They never do!" said we.

MOLLY MULDOON.

Anonymous.

From: The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Humorous Readings and Recitations*, by Various

Molly Muldoon was an Irish girl,  
And as fine a one  
As you'd look upon  
In the cot of a peasant or hall of an earl.  
Her teeth were white, though not of pearl,--  
And dark was her hair, but it did not curl;  
Yet few who gazed on her teeth and her hair,  
But owned that a power of beauty was there.  
Now many a hearty and rattling gorsoon  
Whose fancy had charmed his heart into tune,  
Would dare to approach fair Molly Muldoon,  
But for \_that\_ in her eye  
Which made most of them shy  
And look quite ashamed, though they couldn't tell why--  
Her eyes were large, dark blue, and clear,  
And \_heart\_ and \_mind\_ seemed in them blended.  
If \_intellect\_ sent you one look severe  
\_Love\_ instantly leapt in the next to mend it--  
Hers was the eye to check the rude,  
And hers the eye to stir emotion,  
To keep the sense and soul subdued  
And calm desire into devotion.

There was Jemmy O'Hare,  
As fine a boy as you'd see in a fair,  
And wherever Molly was he was there.  
His face was round and his build was square,  
And he sported as rare  
And tight a pair  
Of legs, to be sure, as are found anywhere.  
And Jemmy would wear  
His \_caubeen\_ and hair  
With such a peculiar and rollicking air,  
That I'd venture to swear  
Not a girl in Kildare  
Nor Victoria's self, if she chanced to be there,  
Could resist his wild way--called "Devil-may-care."  
Not a boy in the parish could match him for fun,  
Nor wrestle, nor leap, nor hurl, nor run  
With Jemmy--No gorsoon could equal him--None,  
At wake, or at wedding, at feast or at fight,  
At throwing the sledge with such dext'rous sleight,--  
He was the envy of men, and the women's delight.

Now Molly Muldoon liked Jemmy O'Hare,  
And in troth Jemmy loved in his heart Miss Muldoon.  
I believe in my conscience a purtier pair  
Never danced in a tent at a pattern in June,--  
To a bagpipe or fiddle  
On the rough cabin door  
That is placed in the middle--  
Ye may talk as ye will  
There's a grace in the limbs of the peasantry there  
With which people of quality couldn't compare;  
And Molly and Jemmy were counted the two  
That would keep up the longest and go the best through  
All the jigs and the reels  
That have occupied heels  
Since the days of the Murtaghs and Brian Boru.

It was on a long bright sunny day  
They sat on a green knoll side by side,  
But neither just then had much to say;  
Their hearts were so full that they only tried  
To do anything foolish, just to hide  
What both of them felt, but what Molly denied.  
They plucked the speckled daisies that grew  
Close by their arms,--then tore them too;  
And the bright little leaves that they broke from the stalk  
They threw at each other for want of talk;  
While the heart-lit look and the sunny smile  
Reflected pure souls without art or guile,  
And every time Molly sighed or smiled,  
Jem felt himself grow as soft as a child;  
And he fancied the sky never looked so bright,  
The grass so green, the daisies so white;  
Everything looked so gay in his sight  
That gladly he'd linger to watch them till night,--  
And Molly herself thought each little bird  
Whose warbling notes her calm soul stirred,--  
Sang only his lay but by her to be heard.

An Irish courtship's short and sweet,  
It's sometimes foolish and indiscreet;  
But who is wise when his young heart's heat  
Whips the pulse to a galloping beat--  
Ties up his judgment neck and feet  
And makes him the slave of a blind conceit?  
Sneer not, therefore, at the loves of the poor,  
Though their manners be rude their affections are pure;  
They look not by art, and they love not by rule,

For their souls are not tempered in fashion's cold school.  
Oh! give me the love that endures no control  
But the delicate instinct that springs from the soul,  
As the mountain stream gushes its freshness and force,  
Yet obedient, wherever it flows to its source.  
Yes, give me that but Nature has taught,  
By rank unallured and by riches unbought;  
Whose very simplicity keeps it secure--  
The love that illumines the heart of the poor.

All blushful was Molly, or shy at least  
    As one week before Lent  
    Jem procured her consent  
To go the next Sunday and spake to the priest,  
    Shrove-Tuesday was named for the wedding to be,  
    And it dawned as bright as they'd wish to see.  
And Jemmy was up at the day's first peep  
For the live-long night, no wink could he sleep;  
    A bran-new coat, with a bright big button,  
    He took from a chest, and carefully put on--  
    And brogues as well \_lampblack\_ as ever went foot on  
Were greased with the fat of \_a quare sort of mutton\_!  
    Then a tidier \_gorsoon\_ couldn't be seen  
    Treading the Emerald sod so green--  
    Light was his step and bright was his eye  
    As he walked through the \_slobbery\_ streets of Athy.  
And each girl he passed, bid "God bless him," and sighed,  
While she wished in her heart that herself was the bride.

Hush! here's the Priest--let not the least  
Whisper be heard till the father has ceased.  
    "Come, bridegroom and bride,  
    That the knot may be tied  
    Which no power upon earth can hereafter divide."  
Up rose the bride, and the bridegroom too,  
And a passage was made for them both to walk through!  
And his Rev'ence stood with a sanctified face,  
Which spread its infection around the place.  
The bridesmaid bustled and whispered the bride,  
Who felt so confused that she almost cried,  
But at last bore up and walked forward, where  
The Father was standing with solemn air;  
The bridegroom was following after with pride,  
    \_When his piercing eye something awful espied\_!  
    He stooped and sighed,  
    Looked round and tried  
To tell what he saw, but his tongue denied:  
    With a spring and a roar,

He jumped to the door,  
AND THE BRIDE LAID HER EYES ON THE BRIDEGROOM NO MORE!

Some years sped on  
Yet heard no one  
Of Jemmy O'Hare, or where he had gone.  
But since the night of that widowed feast,  
The strength of poor Molly had ever decreased;  
Till, at length, from earth's sorrow her soul released,  
Fled up to be ranked with the saints at least.

And the morning poor Molly to live had ceased,  
Just five years after the widowed feast,  
An American letter was brought to the priest,  
Telling of Jemmy O'Hare deceased!  
Who ere his death,  
With his latest breath,  
To a spiritual father unburdened his breast  
And the cause of his sudden departure confest,--  
"Oh! Father," says he, "I've not long to live,  
So I'll freely confess, and hope you'll forgive--  
That same Molly Muldoon, sure I loved her indeed;  
Ay, as well, as the Creed  
That was never forsaken by one of my breed;  
But I couldn't have married her after I saw"--  
"Saw what?" cried the Father desirous to hear--  
And the chair that he sat in unconsciously rocking--  
"Not in her 'karàcter,' yer Rev'rince, a flaw"--  
The sick man here dropped a significant tear  
And died as he whispered in the clergyman's ear--  
"But I saw, God forgive her, A HOLE IN HER STOCKING!"

# THE SANTA FE TRAIL

(A Humoresque)

From The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Congo and Other Poems*, by Vachel Lindsay

I asked the old Negro, "What is that bird that sings so well?" He answered: "That is the Rachel-Jane." "Hasn't it another name, lark, or thrush, or the like?" "No. Jus' Rachel-Jane."

## I. In which a Racing Auto comes from the East

# To be sung delicately, to an improvised tune. #

This is the order of the music of the morning:--

First, from the far East comes but a crooning.

The crooning turns to a sunrise singing.

Hark to the \_calm\_-horn, \_balm\_-horn, \_psalm\_-horn.

Hark to the \_faint\_-horn, \_quaint\_-horn, \_saint\_-horn....

# To be sung or read with great speed. #

Hark to the \_pace\_-horn, \_chase\_-horn, \_race\_-horn.

And the holy veil of the dawn has gone.

Swiftly the brazen car comes on.

It burns in the East as the sunrise burns.

I see great flashes where the far trail turns.

Its eyes are lamps like the eyes of dragons.

It drinks gasoline from big red flagons.

Butting through the delicate mists of the morning,

It comes like lightning, goes past roaring.

It will hail all the wind-mills, taunting, ringing,

Dodge the cyclones,

Count the milestones,

On through the ranges the prairie-dog tills--

Scooting past the cattle on the thousand hills....

# To be read or sung in a rolling bass,

with some deliberation. #

Ho for the tear-horn, scare-horn, dare-horn,

Ho for the \_gay\_-horn, \_bark\_-horn, \_bay\_-horn.

\_Ho for Kansas, land that restores us

When houses choke us, and great books bore us!

Sunrise Kansas, harvester's Kansas,

A million men have found you before us.\_

## II. In which Many Autos pass Westward

# In an even, deliberate, narrative manner. #

I want live things in their pride to remain.



I will not kill one grasshopper vain  
Though he eats a hole in my shirt like a door.  
I let him out, give him one chance more.  
Perhaps, while he gnaws my hat in his whim,  
Grasshopper lyrics occur to him.

I am a tramp by the long trail's border,  
Given to squalor, rags and disorder.  
I nap and amble and yawn and look,  
Write fool-thoughts in my grubby book,  
Recite to the children, explore at my ease,  
Work when I work, beg when I please,  
Give crank-drawings, that make folks stare  
To the half-grown boys in the sunset glare,  
And get me a place to sleep in the hay  
At the end of a live-and-let-live day.

I find in the stubble of the new-cut weeds  
A whisper and a feasting, all one needs:  
The whisper of the strawberries, white and red  
Here where the new-cut weeds lie dead.

But I would not walk all alone till I die  
Without some life-drunk horns going by.  
Up round this apple-earth they come  
Blasting the whispers of the morning dumb:--  
Cars in a plain realistic row.  
And fair dreams fade  
When the raw horns blow.

On each snapping pennant  
A big black name:--  
The careering city  
Whence each car came.

# Like a train-caller in a Union Depot. #  
They tour from Memphis, Atlanta, Savannah,  
Tallahassee and Texarkana.  
They tour from St. Louis, Columbus, Manistee,  
They tour from Peoria, Davenport, Kankakee.  
Cars from Concord, Niagara, Boston,  
Cars from Topeka, Emporia, and Austin.  
Cars from Chicago, Hannibal, Cairo.  
Cars from Alton, Oswego, Toledo.  
Cars from Buffalo, Kokomo, Delphi,  
Cars from Lodi, Carmi, Loami.  
Ho for Kansas, land that restores us  
When houses choke us, and great books bore us!  
While I watch the highroad

And look at the sky,  
While I watch the clouds in amazing grandeur  
Roll their legions without rain  
Over the blistering Kansas plain--  
While I sit by the milestone  
And watch the sky,  
The United States  
Goes by.

# To be given very harshly,  
with a snapping explosiveness. #  
Listen to the iron-horns, ripping, racking.  
Listen to the quack-horns, slack and clacking.  
Way down the road, trilling like a toad,  
Here comes the \_dice\_-horn, here comes the \_vice\_-horn,  
Here comes the \_snarl\_-horn, \_brawl\_-horn, \_lewd\_-horn,  
Followed by the \_prude\_-horn, bleak and squeaking:--  
(Some of them from Kansas, some of them from Kansas.)  
Here comes the \_hod\_-horn, \_plod\_-horn, \_sod\_-horn,  
Nevermore-to-\_roam\_-horn, \_loam\_-horn, \_home\_-horn.  
(Some of them from Kansas, some of them from Kansas.)

# To be read or sung, well-nigh in a whisper. #  
Far away the Rachel-Jane  
Not defeated by the horns  
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:--  
"Love and life,  
Eternal youth--  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet,  
Dew and glory,  
Love and truth,  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet."

# Louder and louder, faster and faster. #  
WHILE SMOKE-BLACK FREIGHTS ON THE DOUBLE-TRACKED RAILROAD,  
DRIVEN AS THOUGH BY THE FOUL-FIEND'S OX-GOAD,  
SCREAMING TO THE WEST COAST, SCREAMING TO THE EAST,  
CARRY OFF A HARVEST, BRING BACK A FEAST,  
HARVESTING MACHINERY AND HARNESS FOR THE BEAST.  
THE HAND-CARS WHIZ, AND RATTLE ON THE RAILS,  
THE SUNLIGHT FLASHES ON THE TIN DINNER-PAILS.

# In a rolling bass, with increasing deliberation. #  
And then, in an instant,  
Ye modern men,  
Behold the procession once again,

# With a snapping explosiveness. #  
Listen to the iron-horns, ripping, racking,  
Listen to the \_wise\_-horn, desperate-to-\_advise\_-horn,  
Listen to the \_fast\_-horn, \_kill\_-horn, \_blast\_-horn....  
# To be sung or read well-nigh in a whisper. #

Far away the Rachel-Jane  
Not defeated by the horns  
Sings amid a hedge of thorns:--  
Love and life,  
Eternal youth,  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet,  
Dew and glory,  
Love and truth.  
Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet.

# To be brawled in the beginning with a  
snapping explosiveness, ending in a languorous chant. #

The mufflers open on a score of cars  
With wonderful thunder,  
CRACK, CRACK, CRACK,  
CRACK-CRACK, CRACK-CRACK,  
CRACK-CRACK-CRACK,...  
Listen to the gold-horn...  
Old-horn...  
Cold-horn...

And all of the tunes, till the night comes down  
On hay-stack, and ant-hill, and wind-bitten town.

# To be sung to exactly the same whispered tune  
as the first five lines. #

Then far in the west, as in the beginning,  
Dim in the distance, sweet in retreating,  
Hark to the faint-horn, quaint-horn, saint-horn,  
Hark to the calm-horn, balm-horn, psalm-horn....

# This section beginning sonorously,  
ending in a languorous whisper. #

They are hunting the goals that they understand:--  
San Francisco and the brown sea-sand.  
My goal is the mystery the beggars win.  
I am caught in the web the night-winds spin.  
The edge of the wheat-ridge speaks to me.  
I talk with the leaves of the mulberry tree.  
And now I hear, as I sit all alone  
In the dusk, by another big Santa Fe stone,  
The souls of the tall corn gathering round  
And the gay little souls of the grass in the ground.  
Listen to the tale the cotton-wood tells.  
Listen to the wind-mills, singing o'er the wells.  
Listen to the whistling flutes without price  
Of myriad prophets out of paradise.  
Harken to the wonder  
That the night-air carries....  
Listen... to... the... whisper...  
Of... the... prairie... fairies

Singing o'er the fairy plain:--

# To the same whispered tune as the Rachel-Jane song--  
but very slowly. #

"Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet.

Love and glory,

Stars and rain,

Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet...."



## THE HAUNTED PHOTOGRAPH

By Ruth Mcenery Stuart

From \_Harper's Bazar\_, June, 1909. By permission of \_Harper's Bazar\_.

To the ordinary observer it was just a common photograph of a cheap summer hotel. It hung sumptuously framed in plush, over the Widow Morris's mantel, the one resplendent note in an otherwise modest home, in a characteristic Queen Anne village.

One had only to see the rapt face of its owner as she sat in her weeds before the picture, which she tearfully pronounced "a strikin' likeness," to sympathize with the townsfolk who looked askance at the bereaved woman, even while they bore with her delusion, feeling sure that her sudden sorrow had set her mind agog.

When she had received the picture through the mail, some months before the fire which consumed the hotel--a fire through which she had not passed, but out of which she had come a widow--she proudly passed it around among the friends waiting with her at the post-office, replying to their questions as they admired it:

"Oh, yes! That's where he works--if you can call it work. He's the head steward in it. All that row o' winders where you see the awnin's down, they're his--an' them that ain't down, they're his, too--that is to say, it's his jurisdiction.

"You see, he's got the whip hand over the cook an' the sto'eroom, an' that key don't go out o' his belt unless he knows who's gettin' what--an' he's firm. Morris always was. He's like the iron law of the Ephesians."

"What key?"

It was an old lady who held the picture at arm's length, the more closely to scan it, who asked the question. She asked it partly to know, as neither man nor key appeared in the photograph, and partly to parry the "historic allusion"--a disturbing sort of fire for which Mrs. Morris was rather noted and which made some of her most loyal townsfolk a bit shy of her.

"Oh, I ain't referrin' to the picture," she hastened to explain. "I mean the keys that he always carries in his belt. The reg'lar joke there is to call him 'St. Peter,' an' he takes it in good part, for, he declares, if there \_is\_ such a thing \_as\_ a similitude to the kingdom o' Heaven \_in\_ a hotel, why, it's in the providential supply department which, in a manner, hangs to his belt. He always humors a joke--'specially on himself."

No one will ever know through what painful periods of unrequited longing the Widow Morris had sought solace in this, her only cherished "relic," after the "half hour of sky-works" which had made her, in her own vernacular, "a lonely, conflagrated widow, with a heart full of ashes," before the glad moment when it was given her to discern in it an unsuspected and novel value. First had come, as a faint gleam of comfort, the reflection that although her dear lost one was not in evidence in the picture, he had really been inside the building when the photograph was taken, and so, of course, \_he must be in there yet\_!

At first she experienced a slight disappointment that her man was not visible, at door or window. But it was only a passing regret. It was really better to feel him surely and broadly within--at large in the great house, free to pass at will from one room to another. To have had

him fixed, no matter how effectively, would have been a limitation. As it was, she pressed the picture to her bosom as she wondered if, perchance, he would not some day come out of his hiding to meet her.

It was a muffled pleasure and tremulously entertained at first, but the very whimsicality of it was an appeal to her sensitized imagination, and so, when finally the thing did really happen, it is small wonder that it came somewhat as a shock.

It appears that one day, feeling particularly lonely and forlorn, and having no other comfort, she was pressing her tear-stained face against the row of window-shutters in the room without awnings, this being her nearest approach to the alleged occupant's bosom, when she was suddenly startled by a peculiar swishing sound, as of wind-blown rain, whereupon she lifted her face to perceive that it was indeed raining, and then, glancing back at the photograph, she distinctly saw her husband rushing from one window to another, drawing down the sashes on the side of the house that would have been exposed to the real shower whose music was in her ears.

This was a great discovery, and, naturally enough, it set her weeping, for, she sobbed, it made her feel, for a minute, that she had lost her widowhood and that, after the shower, he'd be coming home.

It might well make any one cry to suddenly lose the pivot upon which his emotions are swung. At any rate, Mrs. Morris cried. She said that she cried all night, first because it seemed so spooky to see him whose remains she had so recently buried on faith, waiving recognition in the débris, dashing about now in so matter-of-fact a way.

And then she wept because, after all, he did not come.

This was the formal beginning of her sense of personal companionship in the picture--companionship, yes, of delight in it, for there is even delight in tears--in some situations in life. Especially is this true of one whose emotions are her only guides, as seems to have been the case with the Widow Morris.

After seeing him draw the window-sashes--and he had drawn them down, ignoring her presence--she sat for hours, waiting for the rain to stop. It seemed to have set in for a long spell, for when she finally fell asleep, "from sheer disappointment, 'long towards morning," it was still raining, but when she awoke the sun shone and all the windows in the picture were up again.

This was a misleading experience, however, for she soon discovered that she could not count upon any line of conduct by the man in the hotel, as the fact that it had one time rained in the photograph at the same time

that it rained outside was but a coincidence and she was soon surprised to perceive all quiet along the hotel piazza, not even an awning flapping, while the earth, on her plane, was torn by storms.

On one memorable occasion when her husband had appeared, flapping the window-panes from within with a towel, she had thought for one brief moment that he was beckoning to her, and that she might have to go to him, and she was beginning to experience terror, with shortness of breath and other premonitions of sudden passing, when she discovered that he was merely killing flies, and she flurriedly fanned herself with the asbestos mat which she had seized from the stove beside her, and staggered out to a seat under the mulberries, as she stammered:

"I do declare, Morris'll be the death of me yet. He's 'most as much care to me dead as he was alive--I made sure--made sure he'd come after me!"

Then, feeling her own fidelity challenged, she hastened to add:

"Not that I hadn't rather go to him than to take any trip in the world, but--but I never did fancy that hotel, and since I've got used to seein' him there so constant, I feel sure that's where we'd put up. My belief is, anyway, that if there's hereafters for some things, there's hereafters for all. From what I can gather, I reckon I'm a kind of a cross between a Swedenborgian and a Gates-ajar--that, of course, engrafted on to a Methodist. Now, that hotel, when it was consumed by fire, which to it was the same as mortal death, why, it either ascended into Heaven, in smoke, or it fell, in ashes--to the other place. If it died worthy, like as not it's undergoin' repairs now for a 'mansion,' jasper cupalos, an'--but, of course, such as that could be run up in a twinklin'.

"Still, from what I've heard, it's more likely gone down to its deserts. It would seem hard for a hotel with so many awned-off corridors an' palmed embrasures with teet-a-teet sofas, to live along without sin."

She stood on her step-ladder, wiping the face of the picture as she spoke, and as she began to back down she discovered the cat under her elbow, glaring at the picture.

"Yes, Kitty! Spit away!" she exclaimed. "Like as not you see even more than I do!"

And as she slipped the ladder back into the closet, she remarked--this to herself, strictly:

"If it hadn't 'a' been for poor puss, I'd 'a' had a heap more pleasure out o' this picture than what I have had--or will be likely to have

again. The way she's taken on, I've almost come to hate it!"

A serpent had entered her poor little Eden--even the green-eyed monster constrictor, who, if given full swing, would not spare a bone of her meager comfort.

A neighbor who chanced to come in at the time, unobserved overheard the last remark, and Mrs. Morris, seeing that she was there, continued in an unchanged tone, while she gave her a chair:

"Of course, Mis' Withers, you can easy guess who I refer to. I mean that comblly-featured wench that kep' the books an' answered the telephone at the hotel--when she found the time from her meddlin'. Somehow, I never thought about her bein' \_burned in\_ with Morris till puss give her away. Puss never did like the girl when she was alive, an' the first time I see her scratch an' spit at the picture, just the way she used to do whenever \_she\_ come in sight, why, it just struck me like a clap o' thunder out of a clear sky that puss knew who she was a-spittin' at--an' I switched around sudden--an' glanced up sudden--an'----

"Well, what I seen, I seen! There was that beautied-up typewriter settin' in the window-sill o' Morris's butler's pantry--an' if she didn't wink at me malicious, then I don't know malice when I see it. An' she used her fingers against her nose, too, most defiant and impolite. So I says to puss I says, 'Puss,' I says, 'there's \_goin's on\_ in that hotel, sure as fate. Annabel Bender has got the better o' me, for once!' An', tell the truth, it did spoil the photograph for me for a while, for, of course, after that, if I didn't see him somewheres on the watch for his faithful spouse, I'd say to myself, 'He's inside there with that pink-featured hussy!'

"You know, a man's a man, Mis' Withers--'specially Morris, an' with his lawful wife cut off an' indefinitely divorced by a longevitied family--an' another burned in with him--well, his faithfulness is put to a trial by fire, as you might say. So, as I say, it spoiled the picture for me, for a while.

"An', to make matters worse, it wasn't any time before I recollected that Campbellite preacher thet was burned in with them, an' with that my imagination run riot, an' I'd think to myself, '\_If\_ they're inclined, they cert'n'y have things handy!' Then I'd ketch myself an' say, 'Where's your faith in Scripture, Mary Marthy Matthews, named after two Bible women an' born daughter to an apostle? What's the use?' I'd say, an' so, first an' last, I'd get a sort o' alpha an' omega comfort out o' the passage about no givin' in marriage. Still, there'd be times, pray as I would, when them three would loom up, him an' her--\_an'\_ the Campbellite preacher. I know his license to marry would run out \_in time\_, but for eternity, of course we don't know. Seem like everything



would last forever--an' then again, if I've got a widow's freedom, Morris must be classed as a widower, if he's anything.

"Then I'd get some relief in thinkin' about his disposition. Good as he was, Morris was fickle-tasted, not in the long run, but day in an' day out, an' even if he'd be taken up with her he'd get a distaste the minute he reelized she'd be there interminable. That's Morris. Why, didn't he used to get nervous just seein' \_me\_ around, an' me his own selected? An' didn't I use to make some excuse to send him over to Mame Maddern's ma's ma's--so's he'd be harmlessly diverted? She was full o' talk, and she was ninety-odd an' asthmatic, but he'd come home from them visits an' call me his child wife. I've had my happy moments!

"You know a man'll get tired of himself, even, if he's condemned to it too continual, and think of that blondinette typewriter for a steady diet--to a man like Morris! Imagine her when her hair dye started to give out--green streaks in that pompadour! So, knowin' my man, I'd take courage an' I'd think, 'Seein' me cut off, he'll soon be wantin' me more than ever'--an' so he does. It's got so now that, glance up at that hotel any time I will, I can generally find him on the lookout, an' many's the time I've stole in an' put on a favoryte apron o' his with blue bows on it, when we'd be alone an' nobody to remark about me breakin' my mournin'. Dear me, how full o' b'oyancy he was--a regular boy at thirty-five, when he passed away!"

Was it any wonder that her friends exchanged glances while Mrs. Morris entertained them in so droll a way? Still, as time passed and she not only brightened in the light of her delusion, but proceeded to meet the conditions of her own life by opening a small shop in her home, and when she exhibited a wholesome sense of profit and loss, her neighbors were quite ready to accept her on terms of mental responsibility.

With occupation and a modest success, emotional disturbance was surely giving place to an even calm, when, one day, something happened.

Mrs. Morris sat behind her counter, sorting notions, puss asleep beside her, when she heard the swish of thin silk, with a breath of familiar perfume, and, looking up, whom did she see but the blond lady of her troubled dreams striding bodily up to the counter, smiling as she swished.

At the sight the good woman first rose to her feet, and then as suddenly dropped--flopped--breathless and white--backward--and had to be revived, so that for the space of some minutes things happened very fast--that is, if we may believe the flurried testimony of the blonde, who, in going over it, two hours later, had more than once to stop for breath.

"Well, say!" she panted. "Did you ever! \_Such\_ a turn as took her! I

hadn't no more 'n stepped in the door when she succumbed, green as the Ganges, into her own egg-basket--an' it full! An' she was on the eve o' floppin' back into the prunin' scizzor points up, when I scrambled over the counter, breakin' my straight-front in two, which she's welcome to, poor thing! Then I loaned her my smellin'-salts, which she held her breath against until it got to be a case of smell or die, an' she smelt! Then it was a case of temporary spasms for a minute, the salts spillin' out over her face, but when the accident evaporated, an' she opened her eyes, rational, I thought to myself, 'Maybe she don't know she's keeled an' would be humiliated if she did,' so I acted callous, an' I says, offhand like, I says, pushin' her apron around behind her over its \_vice versa\_, so's to cover up the eggs, which I thought had better be broke to her gently, I says, 'I just called in, Mis' Morris, to borry your recipe for angel-cake--or maybe get you to bake one for us' (I knew she baked on orders). An' with that, what does she do but go over again, limp as wet starch, down an' through every egg in that basket, solid \_an'\_ fluid!

"Well, by this time, a man who had seen her at her first worst an' run for a doctor, he come in with three, an' whilst they were bowin' to each other an' backin', I giv' 'er stimulus an' d'rectly she turned upon me one rememberable gaze, an' she says, 'Doctors,' says she, 'would you think they'd have the gall to try to get me to cook for 'em? They've ordered angel-ca----' An' with that, over she toppled again, no pulse nor nothin', same as the dead!"

While the blonde talked she busied herself with her loosely falling locks, which she tried vainly to entrap.

"An' yet you say she ain't classed as crazy? I'd say it of her, sure! An' so old Morris is dead--burned in that old hotel! Well, well! Poor old fellow! Dear old place! What times I've had!"

She spoke through a mouthful of gilt hairpins and her voice was as an Æolian harp.

"An' he burned in it--an' she's a widow yet! Yes, I did hear there'd been a fire, but you never can tell. I thought the chimney might 'a' burned out--an' I was in the thick of bein' engaged to the night clerk at the Singin' Needles Hotel at Pineville at the time--an' there's no regular mail there. I thought the story might be exaggerated. Oh no, I didn't marry the night clerk. I'm a bride now, married to the head steward, same rank as poor old Morris--an' we're just \_as\_ happy! I used to pleg Morris about \_her\_ hair, but I'd have to let up on that now. Mine's as red again as hers. No, not my hair--\_mine's\_ hair. It's as red as a flannen drawer, every bit an' grain!

"But, say," she added, presently, "when she gets better, just tell her

never mind about that reci-pe. I copied it out of her reci-pe book whilst she was under the weather, an' dropped a dime in her cash-drawer. I recollect how old Morris used to look forward to her angel-cakes week-ends he'd be goin' home, an' you know there's nothin' like havin' ammunition, in marriage, even if you never need it. Mine's in that frame of mind now that transforms my gingerbread into angel-cake, but the time may come when I'll have to beat my eggs to a fluff even for angel-cake, so's not to have it taste like gingerbread to him.

"Oh no, he's not with me this trip. I just run down for a lark to show my folks my ring an' things, an' let 'em see it's really so. He give me considerable jewelry. His First's taste run that way, an' they ain't no children.

"Yes, this amethyst is the weddin'-ring. I selected that on account of him bein' a widower. It's the nearest I'd come to wearin' second mournin' for a woman I can't exactly grieve after. The year not bein' up is why he stayed home this trip. He didn't like to be seen traversin' the same old haunts with Another till it \_was\_ up. I wouldn't wait because, tell the truth, I was afraid. He ain't like a married man with me about money yet, an' it's liable to seize him any day. He might say that he couldn't afford the trip, or that we couldn't, which would amount to the same thing. I rather liked him bein' a little ticklish about goin' around with me for a while. It's one thing to do a thing an' another to be brazen about it--it----

"But if she don't get better"--the reversion was to the Widow Morris--"if she don't get her mind poor thing! there's a fine insane asylum just out of Pineville, an' I'd like the best in the world to look out for her. It would make an excuse for me to go in. They say they have high old times there. Some days they let the inmates do 'most any old thing that's harmless. They even give 'em unpoisonous paints an' let 'em paint each other up. One man insisted he was a barber-pole an' ringed himself accordingly, an' then another chased him around for a stick of peppermint candy. Think of all that inside a close fence, an' a town so dull an' news-hungry----

"Yes, they say Thursdays is paint days, an', of course, Fridays, they are scrub days. They pass around turpentine an' hide the matches. But, of course, Mis' Morris may get the better of it. 'Tain' every woman that can stand widowin', an' sometimes them that has got the least out of marriage will seem the most deprived to lose it--so they say."

The blonde was a person of words.

\* \* \* \* \*

When Mrs. Morris had fully revived and, after a restoring "night's

sleep" had got her bearings, and when she realized clearly that her supposed rival had actually shown up in the flesh, she visibly braced up. Her neighbors understood that it must have been a shock "to be suddenly confronted with any souvenir of the hotel fire"--so one had expressed it--and the incident soon passed out of the village mind.

It was not long after this incident that the widow confided to a friend that she was coming to depend upon Morris for advice in her business.

"Standing as he does, in that hotel door--between two worlds, as you might say--why, he sees both ways, and oftentimes he'll detect an event \_on the way to happening\_, an' if it don't move too fast, why, I can hustle an' get the better of things." It was as if she had a private wire for advance information--and she declared herself happy.

Indeed, a certain ineffable light such as we sometimes see in the eyes of those newly in love came to shine from the face of the widow, who did not hesitate to affirm, looking into space as she said it:

"Takin' all things into consideration, I can truly say that I have never been so truly and ideely married as since my widowhood." And she smiled as she added:

"Marriage, the earthly way, is vicissitudinous, for everybody knows that anything is liable to happen to a man at large."

There had been a time when she lamented that her picture was not "life-sized" as it would seem so much more natural, but she immediately reflected that that hotel would never have gotten into her little house, and that, after all, the main thing was having "him" under her own roof.

As the months passed Mrs. Morris, albeit she seemed serene and of peaceful mind, grew very white and still. Fire is white in its ultimate intensity. The top, spinning its fastest, is said to "sleep"--and the dancing dervish is "still." So, misleading signs sometimes mark the danger-line.

"Under-eating and over-thinking" was what the doctor said while he felt her translucent wrist and prescribed nails in her drinking-water. If he secretly knew that kind nature was gently letting down the bars so that a waiting spirit might easily pass--well, he was a doctor, not a minister. His business was with the body, and he ordered repairs.

She was only thirty-seven and "well" when she passed painlessly out of life. It seemed to be simply a case of going.

There were several friends at her bedside the night she went, and to them she turned, feeling the time come:

"I just wanted to give out that the first thing I intend to do when I'm relieved is to call by there for Morris"--she lifted her weary eyes to the picture as she spoke--"for Morris--and I want it understood that it'll be a vacant house from the minute I depart. So, if there's any other woman that's calculatin' to have any carryin's-on from them windows--why, she'll be disappointed--she or they. The one obnoxious person I thought was in it \_wasn't\_. My imagination was tempted of Satan an' I was misled. So it must be sold for just what it is--just a photographer's photograph. If it's a picture with a past, why, everybody knows what that past is, and will respect it. I have tried to conquer myself enough to bequeath it to the young lady I suspicioned, but human nature is frail, an' I can't quite do it, although doubtless she would like it as a souvenir. Maybe she'd find it a little too souvenirish to suit my wifely taste, and yet--if a person is going to die----

"I suppose I might legate it to her, partly to recompense her for her discretion in leaving that hotel when she did--an' partly for undue suspicion----

"There's a few debts to be paid, but there's eggs an' things that'll pay them, an' there's no need to have the hen settin' in the window showcase any longer. It was a good advertisement, but I've often thought it might be embarrassin' to her." She was growing weaker, but she roused herself to amend:

"Better raffle the picture for a dollar a chance an' let the proceeds go to my funeral--an' I want to be buried in the hotel-fire general grave, commingled with him--an' what's left over after the debts are paid, I bequeath to \_her\_--to make amends--an' if she don't care to come for it, let every widow in town draw for it. But she'll come. 'Most any woman'll take any trip, if it's paid for--But look!" she raised her eyes excitedly toward the mantel, "Look! What's that he's wavin'? It looks--oh yes, it is--it's our wings--two pairs--mine a little smaller. I s'pose it'll be the same old story--I'll never be able to keep up--to keep up with him--an' I've been so hap----

"Yes, Morris--I'm comin'----

And she was gone--into a peaceful sleep from which she easily passed just before dawn.

When all was well over, the sitting women rose with one accord and went to the mantel, where one even lighted an extra candle more clearly to scan the mysterious picture.

Finally one said:

"You may think I'm queer, but it does look different to me already!"

"So it does," said another, taking the candle. "Like a house for rent. I declare, it gives me the cold shivers."

"I'll pay my dollar gladly, and take a chance for it," whispered a third, "but I wouldn't let such a thing as that enter my happy home----"

"Neither would I!"

"Nor me, neither. I've had trouble enough. My husband's first wife's portrait has brought me discord enough--an' it was a straight likeness. I don't want any more pictures to put in the hen-house loft."

So the feeling ran among the wives.

"Well," said she who was blowing out the candle, "I'll draw for it--an' take it if I win it, an' consider it a sort of inheritance. I never inherited anything but indigestion."

The last speaker was a maiden lady, and so was she who answered, chuckling:

"That's what I say! Anything for a change. There'd be some excitement in a picture where a man was liable to show up. It's more than I've got now. I do declare it's just scandalous the way we're gigglin', an' the poor soul hardly out o' hearin'. She had a kind heart, Mis' Morris had, an' she made herself happy with a mighty slim chance----"

"Yes, she did--and I only wish there'd been a better man waitin' for her in that hotel."



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# WHISKABOOM

By Alan Arkin

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*Jack's blunder was disastrous, but what he  
worried about was: would Einstein have approved?*

Dear Mr. Gretch:

Mrs. Burroughs and I are sending your son Jack to you because we do not know what else to do with him. As you can see, we can't keep him with us in his present condition.

Also, Jack owes us two weeks rent and, since Mrs. Burroughs and I are retired, we would appreciate your sending the money. It has been a dry year and our garden has done poorly.

The only reason we put up with your son in the first place was because we are so hard-pressed.

He saw the sign on the porch, rang the bell and paid Mrs. Burroughs a month's rent without even looking at the room. Then he ran out to his car and commenced pulling out suitcases and boxes and dragging them upstairs.

After the third trip, Mrs. Burroughs saw he was having trouble with the stuff and he looked kind of worn out, so she offered to help.

He gave her a hard look, as she described it to me when I got home. He said, "I don't want anyone touching anything. Please don't interfere."

"I didn't mean to interfere," my wife told him. "I only wanted to help."

"I don't want any help," he said quietly, but with a wild look in his eye, and he staggered upstairs with the last of his baggage and locked

the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

When I got home, Mrs. Burroughs told me she thought I ought to take a look at the new boarder. I went up, thinking we'd have a little chat and straighten things out. I could hear him inside, hammering on something.

He didn't hear my first knock or the second. I got sore and nearly banged the door down, at which time he decided to open up.

I charged in, ready to fight a bear. And there was this skinny red-headed son of yours glaring at me.

"That's a lot of hammering you're doing, son," I said.

"That's the only way I can get these boxes open, and don't call me son."

"I don't like to disturb you, Mr. Gretch, but Mrs. Burroughs is a little upset over the way you acted today. I think you ought to come down for a cup of tea and get acquainted."

"I know I was rude," he said, looking a little ashamed, "but I have waited for years for a chance to get to work on my own, with no interference. I'll come down tomorrow, when I have got my equipment set up, and apologize to Mrs. Burroughs then."

I asked him what he was working on, but he said he would explain later. Before I got out of the door, he was hammering again. He worked till after midnight.

We saw Jack at mealtimes for the next few days, but he didn't talk much. We learned that he was twenty-six, in spite of his looking like a boy in his teens, that he thought Prof. Einstein the greatest man ever, and that he disliked being called son. Of his experiment, he didn't have much to say then. He saw Mrs. Burroughs was a little nervous about his experimenting in the guest room and he assured her it was not dangerous.

Before the week was out, we started hearing the noises. The first one was like a wire brush going around a barrel. It went \_whisk, whisk\_. Then he rigged up something that went \_skaboom\_ every few seconds, like a loud heartbeat. Once in a while, he got in a sound like a creaky well pump, but mostly it was \_skaboom\_ and \_whisk\_, which eventually settled down to a steady rhythm, \_whiskaboom, whiskaboom\_.

It was kind of pleasant.



\* \* \* \* \*

Neither of us saw him for two days. The noises kept going on. Mrs. Burroughs was alarmed because he did not answer her knock at mealtimes, and one morning she charged upstairs and hollered at him through the door.

"You stop your nonsense this minute and come down to breakfast!"

"I'm not hungry," he called back.

"You open this door!" she ordered and, by George, he did. "Your \_whiskaboom\_ or whatever it is will keep till after breakfast."

He sat at the table, but he was a tired boy. He had a cold, his eyelids kept batting, and I don't believe he could have lifted his coffee cup. He tried to look awake, and then over he went with his face in the oatmeal.

Mrs. Burroughs ran for the ammonia, but he was out cold, so we wiped the oatmeal off his face and carried him upstairs.

My wife rubbed Jack's wrists with garlic and put wet towels on his face, and presently he came to. He looked wildly about the room at his machinery. It was all there, and strange-looking stuff, too.

"Please go away," he begged. "I've got work to do."

Mrs. Burroughs helped him blow his nose. "There'll be no work for you, sonny. Not until you're well. We'll take care of you." He didn't seem to mind being called sonny.

He was sick for a week and we tended him like one of our own. We got to know him pretty well. And we also got to know you.

Now, Mr. Gretch, whatever you are doing in your laboratory is your own business. You could be making atomic disintegrators, for all Jack told us. But he does not like or approve of it and he told us about your running battle with him to keep him working on your project instead of his own.

Jack tried to explain his ideas for harnessing time and what he called "the re-integration principle." It was all so much \_whiskaboom\_ to us, so to speak, but he claimed it was for the good of mankind, which was fine with us.

But he said you would not let him work it out because there was less

money in it than in your project, and this is why he had to get away and work and worry himself into a collapse.

When he got well, Mrs. Burroughs told him, "From now on, you're going to have three meals a day and eight hours sleep, and in between you can play on your \_whiskaboom\_ all you please."

The \_whiskabooming\_ became as familiar to us as our own voices.

Last Sunday, Mrs. Burroughs and I came home from church, about noon. She went inside through the front door to fix dinner. I walked around the house to look at the garden. And the moment I walked past the front of the house, I got the shock of my life.

The house disappeared!

\* \* \* \* \*

I was too surprised to stop walking, and a step later I was standing at the back of the house, and it was all there. I took a step back and the whole house vanished again. One more step and I was at the front.

It looked like a real house in front and in back, but there wasn't any in-between. It was like one of those false-front saloons on a movie lot, but thinner.

I thought of my wife, who had gone into the kitchen and, for all I knew, was as thin as the house, and I went charging in the back door, yelling.

"Are you all right?"

"Of course I'm all right," she said. "What's the matter with you?"

I grabbed her and she was all there, thank heavens. She giggled and called me an old fool, but I dragged her outside and showed her what had happened to our house.

She saw it, too, so I knew I didn't have sunstroke, but she couldn't understand it any better than I.

Right about then, I detected a prominent absence of \_whiskabooming\_. "Jack!" I hollered, and we hurried back into the house and upstairs.

Well, Mr. Gretch, it was so pitiful, I can't describe it. He was there, but I never saw a more miserable human being. He was not only thin but also flat, like a cartoon of a man who had been steamrollered. He was lying on the bed, holding onto the covers, with no more substance to

him than a thin piece of paper. Less.

Mrs. Burroughs took one of his shoulders between her thumb and forefinger, and I took the other, and we held him up. There was a breeze coming through the window and Jack--well, he waved in the breeze.

We closed the window and laid him down again and he tried to explain what had happened. "Professor Einstein wouldn't have liked this!" he moaned. "Something went wrong," he cried, shuddering.

He went on gasping and mumbling, and we gathered that he had hooked up a circuit the wrong way. "I didn't harness the fourth--I chopped off the third dimension! Einstein wouldn't have approved!"

He was relieved to learn that the damage had been confined to himself and the house, so far as we knew. Like the house, Jack had insides, but we don't know where they are. We poured tea down him, and he can eat, after a fashion, but there never is a sign of a lump anywhere.

\* \* \* \* \*

That night, we pinned him to the bed with clothespins so he wouldn't blow off the bed. Next morning, we rigged a line and pinned him to it so he could sit up.

"I know what to do," he said, "but I would have to go back to the lab. Dad would have to let me have his staff and all sorts of equipment. And he won't do it."

"If he thinks more of his money than he does of his own son," Mrs. Burroughs said, "then he's an unnatural father."

But Jack made us promise not to get in touch with you.

Still, people are beginning to talk. The man from the electric company couldn't find the meter yesterday, because it is attached to the middle of the outside wall and has vanished.

Mr. Gretch, we are parents and we feel that you will not hesitate a moment to do whatever is necessary to get Jack back into shape. So, despite our promise, we are sending Jack to you by registered parcel post, air mail. He doesn't mind the cardboard mailing tube he is rolled up in as he has been sleeping in it, finding it more comfortable than being pinned to the sheets.

Jack is a fine boy, sir, and we hope to hear soon that he is back to normal and doing the work he wants to do.

Very truly yours,

W. Burroughs

P.S. When Jack figures out the re-integration principle, we would appreciate his fixing our house. We get along as usual, but it makes us nervous to live in a house that, strictly speaking, has no insides. W.B.

